



# HAVE COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

## > Rev. Tim Smith

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**P**ittsburgh is a great city to live in. I wouldn't really want to live anywhere else. But we haven't really had to deal with injustices and racism head on, where it all came to a head, like many cities in the south have had to do. Here, it's been somewhat quiet.

At some point you have to have some courageous conversations. And we have to deal with systems that tend to keep things the same.

We can't skip over the past to get to the future. We have to understand where we've come from. It's easy to say, "Those things happened, let's just move on." But people who've been invisible in this city have to become visible, and they have to be heard.

In our public school system, we have levels of access to education. Some kids get a higher level of education. Some get a substandard education. At the Center of Life, we know we can educate every kid. We know they're learning. We see that. But when kids can

get a gun and drugs easier than they can get a good education, there's a problem.

When people in under-served communities hear development is coming, they're concerned. They've seen what development has done to other communities. They've seen people displaced, have to pick up and leave, and send their kids to another school.

We have to have conversations about these things. We have to come together at the table not as different with more, or different with less, but different and equal. White people have to listen to the stories that black people have to tell—stories about inequity. Black people have to be willing to give white people grace.

Conversations bring understanding. Relationships bring understanding. We can't see each other unless we build relationships with each other.

— Interviewed by Jeffery Fraser